

## Pro Bono Lawyer Spotlight: Howard Berkower, Partner

11.26.2018

Related People:

Howard M. Berkower

Howard Berkower, partner in the Corporate, Securities & Business Transactions practice, answers McCarter's five pro bono questions.

### 1. What pro bono work are you doing now?

I have a number of active pro bono matters involving corporate governance and mergers and acquisitions for nonprofit organizations in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. All of these matters came to me on referral from the Pro Bono Partnership, an organization that helps eligible nonprofits get connected to pro bono counsel.

I have worked with several associates and colleagues in the firm to assist our nonprofit clients with projects, such as reviewing certificates of incorporation, bylaws and other governance documents, as well as more complex issues, like combining two organizations with and without asset transfers. I particularly enjoy the opportunity to teach younger attorneys through partnering with them on these projects, and I have worked with Mara Vento and Evan Bakhiet on multiple pro bono projects.

In our just-ended fiscal year, we have successfully assisted several New York- and New Jersey-area nonprofits with amending and restating their bylaws and corporate governance documents, freeing them up to focus on their missions.

Some of these include:

#### In New Jersey:

- Ladies of Hip-Hop
- The Foundation for Manalapan – Englishtown Regional Schools
- New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Foundation
- Cathedral Community Development Corporation
- Community Action Service Center

#### In New York:

Friends of the Related Senior Volunteer Program of Suffolk County

On the transaction side, we assisted Victim Rights Center of Connecticut, which provides legal and other services to survivors of sexual violence, in transferring its assets and other resources to Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence, a substantially larger nonprofit. Amy Mittelman and Lou Chiafullo worked with me on this project.

And with the help of Amy Mittelman, we prepared a commercial agreement for Jewish Family Services of Greenwich, Connecticut.

**2. Why do you think it's important for lawyers to provide pro bono legal services?**

Pro bono work gives you the opportunity to examine issues common to your practice through a different prism.

It is an excellent way to network and develop working relationships with directors, trustees and officers whose day jobs often involve senior roles in successful for-profit businesses.

It is a great way to use your legal skills to contribute to society in a different yet highly meaningful way. The skills that we develop through practicing law make it relatively simple for us to handle things, like reviewing bylaws, that can be huge barriers for small nonprofits.

**3. What would you say to a lawyer who is considering getting involved in pro bono for the first time?**

I guarantee it will be a rewarding and enjoyable experience.

**4. What's something people don't know about you?**

I am the head of our firm's food committee, which meets regularly, usually on Fridays, and goes to lunch at one of the many excellent and unique restaurants near our New York office. There are so many restaurants that serve terrific food at decent prices, particularly since we moved to the Westside Theatre District. Armed with the intelligence we gather from these excursions, we can advise our colleagues when they entertain our clients or prospective clients in New York City. We are always seeking ways to leverage our know-how, experience and expertise, whether in the law or in other disciplines, to benefit the entire firm.

**5. What pro bono matter has been particularly significant to you?**

Working with and getting to know the directors and senior officers of Victim Rights Center of Connecticut and Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence. The work they do is so important. It was a privilege to be helpful in their mission, if only for a short period of time.